



NEWS RELEASE

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**FOUR OUT OF FIVE CHILD SAFETY SEATS ARE INSTALLED
INCORRECTLY – IS YOUR CHILD’S ONE?**

***MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CONTINUES 12 MONTHS
OF SAFETY CAMPAIGN; FEBRUARY FOCUS IS ON CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY***

(February 3, 2004) — We can all agree that children are our most precious resource, and protecting them is one of our most important responsibilities. Children riding in an inadequate or improperly installed child safety seat are in very real danger of injury or even death during a crash. In the second month of its 12 Months of Safety initiative, the Maryland Department of Transportation highlights child passenger safety. Empowering motorists to protect their youngest and most vulnerable passengers, Maryland State Highway Administration’s Highway Safety Office presents a review of child passenger safety laws and tips to ensure that seats are installed correctly. Despite record-high use of child safety seats across the nation, many children —especially older children— continue to ride unrestrained or improperly restrained. In fact, 48 percent of children between the ages of 4 and 8 who were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2001 were completely unrestrained (Fatal Analysis Reporting System, April 2003). In child passenger safety checkup events around the State, more than 85% of seats are found to be installed incorrectly.

Maryland will join other jurisdictions during the second week of February in highlighting National Child Passenger Safety Month, February 8-14 with child seat checks and community outreach activities. “Safety is our number one priority. The goal of 12 Months of Safety is to reverse the trend of rising traffic crashes and fatalities by emphasizing 12 key areas of traffic safety,” said State Highway Administrator Neil J. Pedersen. “When it comes to child safety seats, we want to supply caregivers with the tools they need to transport children safely.”

First Lady Kendel S. Ehrlich, Honorary Chairwoman for MD SAFE KIDS Coalition, promoted Maryland’s new child passenger safety law that went into effect on October 1. The new law requires that all children younger than six years of age, regardless of weight, or who weigh 40 pounds or less, regardless of age, must be secured in a federally approved child safety seat according to the safety seat and vehicle manufacturers' instructions. In a new public

(More)

service announcement Mrs. Ehrlich, joined by her son Drew, explains the new Maryland law and the “Five-Step Test.” This test gives parents and caregivers observational guidelines for determining when to discontinue the use of the booster seat.

Whether it is an infant’s trip home from the hospital or a preteen’s ride to soccer practice, all children should be secured in the proper safety device.

- **If the child is younger than one year and weighs less than 20 pounds--**
Restrain him or her in an infant or convertible safety seat, rear-facing; NEVER in the front seat with an air bag. Keep rear-facing until they reach the upper weight limit allowed by the safety seat manufacturer’s instructions, as long as their head is below the top of the safety seat by at least 1 inch.
- **If the child is younger than one year and weighs more than 20 pounds--**
Restrain him or her in a convertible safety seat rated for higher weights rear-facing; NEVER in the front seat with an air bag. Keep rear-facing until they reach the upper weight limit allowed by the safety seat manufacturer’s instructions, as long as their head is below the top of the safety seat by at least 1 inch.
- **If the child is older than one year and has reached the upper weight limit for rear-facing as recommended in the manufacturer’s instructions--**
Restrain him or her in a convertible or toddler-booster seat, forward-facing, until the upper weight/height limit as allowed by the safety seat manufacturer’s instructions is reached.
- **If the child is older than four years and weighs more than 40 pounds--**
Restrain him or her in a high back booster seat with a lap-shoulder belt if you have no head restraints in the back seat of your vehicle, or a no-back booster seat with a lap-shoulder belt if there are head restraints in the back seat of your vehicle. Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she fits into a seat belt properly, usually around age 8.
- **Make sure you and all adult passengers in your vehicle also are properly buckled up, all the time, every time you travel.**

Other important Maryland laws regarding the transport of children:

- A person may not transport a child younger than 16 years of age unless the child is secured in a child safety seat or a vehicle's seat belt.
- A child younger than 16 years may not ride in an unenclosed cargo bed of a pick-up truck.
- A vehicle can be stopped and the driver issued a citation for a violation of these laws. Currently the fines for failing to buckle up children and for allowing a child to ride in an unenclosed cargo truck bed are \$48 and \$50, respectively.

Please remember that it is very important that all children be properly secured in child safety seats and/or seat belts. Buckle up our children - follow our law!

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Editor’s Note: Release, fact sheet and 12 Months of Safety newsletter can be viewed on the web at www.marylandroads.com. Please see attachment of the “5 Test Step.”